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SUBJECT: CYPRIOT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: DEJA VU ALL OVER  
AGAIN

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Classified By: Ambassador Ronald L. Schlicher; Reason  
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Parliamentary elections on the Greek Cypriot side on May 21 left the political landscape in the south essentially unchanged. AKEL narrowly edged out DISY to retain bragging rights as the largest political party, but the two are now dead even in the House with 18 seats apiece. President Papadopoulos' own DIKO turned in a strong showing in terms of both percentages and seats. Other parties considered hard-line on the Cyprus issue -- including EDEK and EVROKO -- also did well. The only clear loser in the election was Michael Papapetrou's United Democrats. Papapetrou's defeat means the loss in both the House and the National Council of the Greek Cypriot side's loudest and most consistent advocate for reunification and reconciliation. Rumors are already circulating in Nicosia of an imminent cabinet re-shuffle that would include "big names" at the MFA and Interior Ministry. Similar rumors in the past, however, have proven to be just that. Papadopoulos comes out of these elections with a relatively strong political hand to play as he prepares for both a possible confrontation with Turkey in the EU this fall and the Presidential campaign in 2008. End Summary.

And the Winner Is...

12. (SBU) As expected (reftel), the left-wing AKEL party narrowly edged out the opposition DISY party in the May 21 parliamentary elections with 31.16% of the vote as compared to 30.33% for DISY. While the communists, therefore, retained bragging rights as the largest political party on the island, the results translated into the same number of seats (18) for AKEL and DISY. This represents the loss of one seat for DISY and two seats for AKEL. For both parties, the results represent a loss of approximately 3.5% from the 2001 elections. President Papadopoulos' own DIKO party finished third, but polled at the high end of expectations (17.91%) and picked up two more seats in the House.

Below are the final results. The numbers in brackets represent the change from the 2001 elections.

AKEL	31.16% (-3.55%)	18 seats (-2)
DISY	30.33% (-3.67)	18 seats (-1)
DIKO	17.91% ( 3.08)	11 seats ( 2)
EDEK	8.91% ( 2.40)	5 seats ( 1)
EVROKO	5.73% ( 0.58%)	3 seats ( 1)
Greens	1.95% (-0.03%)	1 seat (no change)

United Dems.	1.56% (-1.03)	no seat (-1)
Free Citizens	1.22% (n/a)	
EURODI	0.44% (n/a)	

Emblematic of the lackluster campaigns and the lack of enthusiasm surrounding these elections, the level of abstentions and blank ballots was unusually high. Although voting is mandatory in Cyprus, nearly 11% of the electorate stayed home. An additional 2.27% cast blank ballots. Both abstentions and blank ballots are simply discounted in computing the allocation of seats.

#### The Big Winners

13. (C) The big winners in the election were the parties that opposed the Annan Plan in the 2004 referendum: AKEL, DIKO, EDEK, and European Democracy (EVROKO). Although they failed to unseat AKEL and claim the largely symbolic title of "largest party," DISY supporters will be pleased that they polled above the psychologically significant 30% and that they are now tied with the communists at 18 seats apiece. DIKO did not do as well as the party faithful had hoped at the beginning of the campaign, but Papadopoulos will be pleased at the gains in terms of both percentage and seats. EDEK substantially exceeded most observers' expectations and EVROKO posted similarly strong results. The Greens held on to what they had, but Perdikes and his supporters are undoubtedly disappointed with what they will see as a missed opportunity to move beyond the margins of Cypriot politics. The only unvarnished loser from May 21 are the United Democrats and Michael Papapetrou. The failure of the United Democrats to secure a parliamentary seat means the loss of one of the loudest voices on the Greek Cypriot side in support of reunification and reconciliation. The United Democrats are not only out of the House; the party also loses its seat on the National Council. In the wake of the United Democrats' poor showing, Papapetrou announced that he was stepping down as leader. The party's future is uncertain.

14. (SBU) At the candidate level, there are a number of new faces on the scene -- including the omnipresent face of the President's son, Nicholas Papadopoulos. Former government spokesman Kypros Chrysostomides secured a seat running on the AKEL ticket in Nicosia. Meanwhile, some well-known politicians are out of the House, including Katie Clerides and Antonis Karas from DISY, Nicos Pittokopititis from DIKO and Stella Mishialouli from AKEL.

#### More Rumors of a Reshuffle

15. (C) Even before the voting was completed, the political cognoscenti in Nicosia were speculating about the likelihood of a near-term cabinet reshuffle. The rumor mill holds that only Lillikas (Commerce and Industry), Sarris (Finance), Georgiades (Education) and Mavronicolas (Defense) are "safe." There are as many ideas about who might be in line for a particular job as there are commentators. One of the more persistent rumors is that Lillikas might move over to the Foreign Ministry as part of a broad re-shuffle. Interior Minister Christou, it is rumored, may be interested in running for mayor of Limassol. There have been numerous reports of imminent cabinet reshuffles over the past three years. All of them have come to naught. The only one who can say with any certainty what will happen on this score in the wake of the parliamentary elections is Papadopoulos himself.

#### Comment

16. (C) Papadopoulos comes out of the these elections with a relatively strong political hand to play as he prepares for a possible confrontation with Turkey in the fall over the issue of Cypriot access to Turkish ports and airports. The Greek Cypriot public generally supports the President's handling of the Cyprus issue and that confidence is reflected in the

outcome of the May 21 balloting. AKEL is not entirely comfortable in its relationship with the President, but the party leadership is currently under no pressure from its own rank-and-file to rethink its support for the government. AKEL is at some risk, however, of losing what little leverage it might still have over the President. Looking ahead to Presidential elections in 2008, Papadopoulos seems well on his way towards building a coalition of supporters that could put him into a second-round of balloting even without AKEL's backing.

SCHLICHER